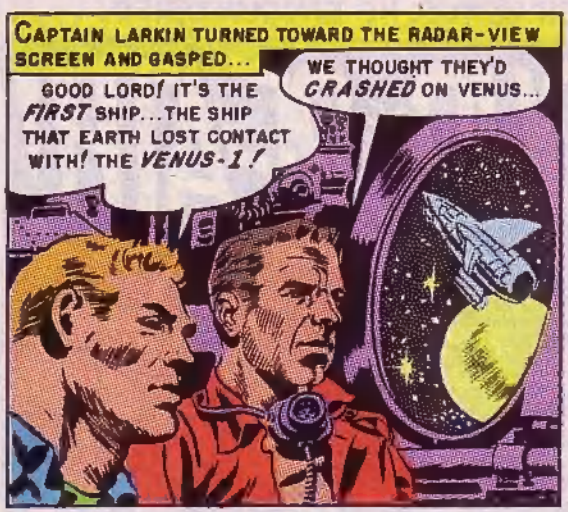
OBJECTIONABLE 1950s EC COMICS!

FANTASY
EC
NO. 9
SEPT.-OCT.
WEIRD
SCIENCE
10¢
INCREDIBLE SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES!

ON MAN'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO REACH VENUS, HE ENCOUNTERED.....

THE GRAY CLOUD OF DEATH!

IN RESPONSE TO THE AGITATED SQUAWKING ON THE INTERCOM, CAPTAIN LARKIN MOVED THROUGH THE EQUIPMENT-LINED CORRIDOR OF THE 'VENUS-2' TOWARD RADAR-VIEW...


CAPTAIN LARKIN TURNED TOWARD THE RADAR-VIEW SCREEN AND GASPED...
GOOD LORD! IT'S THE FIRST SHIP...THE SHIP THAT EARTH LOST CONTACT WITH! THE VENUS-1!
WE THOUGHT THEY'D CRASHED ON VENUS...

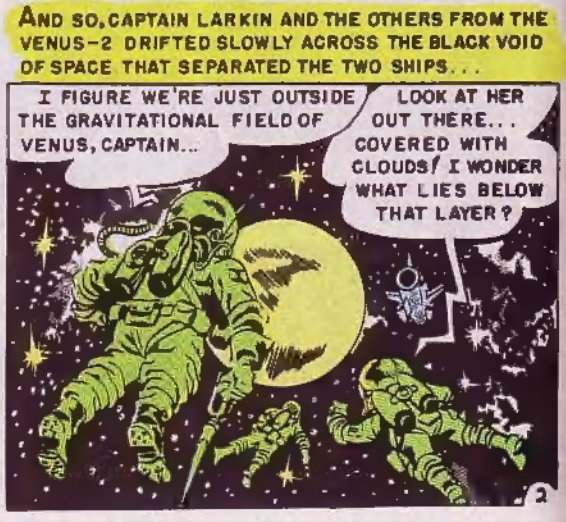
ATTENTION, GYRO-CONTROL! SWING SHIP AROUND! PREPARE FOR STOPPING...
RIGHT! GYRO-CONTROL...NOW SWINGING SHIP...

CAPTAIN LARKIN'S ROCKET-SHIP WAS TURNED, AS IT HURTLED THROUGH SPACE IN FREE-FALL, UNTIL IT WAS SPEEDING STERN FIRST...
SHIP COMPLETELY TURNED, CAPTAIN! ROCKET TUBES NOW POINTED IN DIRECTION OF FLIGHT...
FIRE ROCKETS!

A BLAST FROM THE ROCKET TUBES SLOWED THE VENUS-2...
FIRE ROCKETS AGAIN...

A SUCCESSION OF ROCKET BLASTS FINALLY BROUGHT THE SPACE-SHIP TO A STOP...
WHAT NOW, CAPTAIN?
GET INTO YOUR SPACE-SUITS! WE'RE GOING TO INVESTIGATE THE VENUS-1!

SOON, A PORT IN THE SIDE OF THE GLEAMING VENUS-2 OPENED AND TINY FIGURES CLAD IN SPACE SUITS EMERGED...
THE VENUS-1 MUST BE TWO MILES AWAY, CAPTAIN!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT! JUST PUSH OFF HARD! YOU'LL DRIFT TO HER! USE YOUR ROCKET-BLASTERS IN CASE YOU GO OFF COURSE!


AND SO, CAPTAIN LARKIN AND THE OTHERS FROM THE VENUS-2 DRIFTED SLOWLY ACROSS THE BLACK VOID OF SPACE THAT SEPARATED THE TWO SHIPS...
I FIGURE WE'RE JUST OUTSIDE THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF VENUS, CAPTAIN...
LOOK AT HER OUT THERE... COVERED WITH CLOUDS! I WONDER WHAT LIES BELOW THAT LAYER?

FINALLY, ONE BY ONE, THE SPACE-TRAVELERS LANDED ON THE VENUS-I...
HEY! FELLOWS! I'M DRIFTING BY! HELP!
FIRE YOUR ROCKET BLASTER... AWAY FROM US... QUICKLY...
THE HELPLESS DRIFTING CREW MEMBER POINTED HIS ROCKET BLASTER...A SMALL PISTOL-TYPE WEAPON...IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM WHERE HE WANTED TO GO, AND FIRED IT AGAIN AND AGAIN...
SEE! YOU'RE COMING IN FINE, NOW!
HEY! THIS IS PRETTY GOOD! FOR A MINUTE, I THOUGHT I WAS A GONER...
AFTER THE LAST OF THE CREW WAS SAFELY ASTRIDE THE SILENT VENUS-I, CAPTAIN LARKIN MOTIONED THEM TO FOLLOW HIM, AND HE MOVED ACROSS THE HUGE HULL TO THE PORT...
LOOK! IT'S OPEN...
THE RUBBER-SEAL-EDGING IS GONE! THAT MEANS THE AIRLOCK IS USELESS!
CAPTAIN LARKIN SWUNG OPEN THE INNER DOOR OF THE USELESS AIRLOCK AND STEPPED INSIDE! THE OTHERS FOLLOWED! A HORRIFYING SCENE OF DEATH AND UTTER DESTRUCTION MET THEIR EYES...
RUINED! EVERYTHING RUINED!
LOOK, CAPTAIN! SKELETONS!
MORE HERE...STRIPPED OF CLOTHES AND FLESH!
ONE OF THE INVESTIGATORS FROM THE VENUS-2 KICKED A WHITENED SKULL AND...
IT...IT FELL INTO DUST! JUST A WHITE DUST...
WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED?
THE INSULATION'S GONE FROM ALL THE WIRING...
LEATHER'S STRIPPED FROM THE SEATS...
THE PLASTIC CRYSTALS FROM THE INSTRUMENT PANELS...
IT SEEMS AS THOUGH EVERYTHING THAT WAS ONCE ORGANIC MATERIAL HAS BEEN... REMOVED...OR...
CAPTAIN! COME QUICKLY!
3

SEE? IN THIS METAL TANK! ANOTHER BODY!
BUT THIS ONE ISN'T LIKE THE OTHERS! IT'S PRESERVED!
HE SEEMS TO HAVE STARVED TO DEATH! LOOK! HE'S CLUTCHING A PENCIL IN HIS RIGHT HAND...
...AND IN HIS LEFT... A NOTE-BOOK!
IT'S A DIARY! IT TELLS WHAT HAPPENED...
READ IT, CAPTAIN! START AT THE BEGINNING!
ALL RIGHT! HERE GOES! THE FIRST PAGE STARTS... 'A WARNING... TO WHOEVER FINDS THIS SHIP AND THIS DIARY! LEAVE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!'
'WE WERE APPROACHING THE GRAVITATIONAL FIELD OF VENUS... THE MYSTERIOUS CLOUD-COVERED PLANET... WHEN I SPOTTED A THIN LINE OF THE STUFF MOVING TOWARD THE SHIP...'
LOOK, SIR! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?
SEEMS TO BE A CLOUD FORMATION...
OUT HERE? WHERE THERE'S NO ATMOSPHERE? IT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
LOOK AT IT NOW! IT SEEMS TO BE GATHERING UP AND EXPANDING...
IT'S SURROUNDING THE SHIP! THE SCREEN'S JUST A FLAT GREY! WE'RE STOPPING! THE STUFF IS STOPPING US!
LISTEN! DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
'YES! I HEARD IT! STRANGE SCRATCHING AND HAMMERING SOUNDS CAME FROM THE WALLS OF THE SHIP...'
IT'S THAT STUFF! THAT CLOUD! IT'S ALIVE!
DON'T BE FOOLISH! IT....
THE CLOUD! IT'S SLIPPING IN THE OUTER DOOR OF THE AIR-LOCK!

A THIN WISP OF THE GREY STUFF WAS DRIFTING IN UNDER THE OUTER AIRLOCK DOOR...
THE DOOR'S BUSTED! IT ISN'T CLOSED TIGHTLY!
NO! IT'S ALWAYS SLIGHTLY OPEN WHEN NO AIR IS IN THE LOCK!
IT'S TRYING TO GET IN THROUGH THE INNER DOOR!
IT'S EATING AWAY THE RUBBER SEAL-STRIP!
SOMETHING MADE ME RUN! I WAS FRIGHTENED! I HEARD AN OMINOUS HISSING SOUND AS I DARTED DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE ATMOSPHERIC-ADJUSTMENT TANK!
THIS TANK IS ALL METAL! I'LL HIDE IN HERE...
I JUMPED INTO THE TANK AND SLAMMED THE METAL DOOR CLOSED! I TURNED ON THE INTER-COM AND LISTENED! THE SHIP WAS IN CONFUSION! I HEARD BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAMS OF PAIN! THE STUFF WAS ATTACKING THE MEN...
EEYAAAGH!
NO NO!
NNYAAA
SOON THERE WERE NO MORE SCREAMS! JUST THE HISSING OF THE HORRIBLE GREY CLOUD! THEN THE INTER-COM WENT DEAD! THE STUFF WAS ATTACKING THE INSULATION ON THE WIRES...
HISSSSS
CLIK
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I REMAINED IN THE ATMOSPHERIC-ADJUSTMENT TANK AFTER THE LIGHTS WENT OUT! I JUST LAY THERE IN THE DARKNESS... LISTENING AS THE HISSING GREY STUFF STRIPPED EVERYTHING ORGANIC FROM THE SHIP...
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SIX HOURS LATER WHEN I HEARD THE STUFF LEAVE THE SHIP! I FIGURED I'D BETTER DON A SPACE-SUIT BEFORE OPENING THE TANK-DOOR SINCE THE GREY CLOUD HAD PROBABLY RUINED THE PRESSURE-CONTROL! I WAS RIGHT! I HAD EXPECTED SIGNS OF DEATH... BUT NOTHING LIKE WHAT I SAW...
OUGH! HOW HORRIBLE! JUST SKELETONS!

'IT WAS A HORRIBLE MESS! THE GREY CLOUD HAD STRIPPED THE MEN OF THEIR FLESH... EVEN SUCKED THEIR BONES DRY! WHEN I TOUCHED A BONE, IT CRUMBLED INTO DUST...'

I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT ALIVE! I'LL *STARVE TO DEATH!*

'THEN I THOUGHT OF THE TINS OF EMERGENCY RATIONS STORED IN THE FOOD BINS! I EXAMINED THE EMERGENCY FOOD CAREFULLY! THE STUFF HAD GOTTEN INTO THE REFRIGERATORS BY EATING THROUGH THE RUBBER INSULATING STRIPS AND HAD DEVOURED EVERYTHING... BUT THE TINS OF EMERGENCY RATIONS WERE STILL GOOD...'

I'LL MOVE THE FOOD INTO THE TANK SO I WON'T STARVE TO DEATH IN CASE THE STUFF COMES BACK...

'I HAD BEGUN MOVING THE TINS OF EMERGENCY RATIONS INTO THE TANK WHEN THE GREY CLOUD RETURNED! IT STREAMED IN THE OPEN PORT AS I RAN FOR MY HIDEOUT...'

'I SLAMMED THE TANK-DOOR BEHIND ME AS THE STUFF LICKED AT MY HEELS...'

OH-OH! SOME OF IT GOT *IN...*

'A SMALL PUFF OF THE HIDEOUS CLOUD HAD MANAGED TO GET INSIDE MY TANK BEFORE I COULD SHUT THE GREY-DEATH OUT! IT STREAKED AT ME! I FELT A STINGING BURN AS IT ATE THROUGH MY SPACE SUIT...'

OWWWWW! BLASTED-STUFF!

'I STARTED THE AIR-PRESSURE MOTOR INSIDE THE TANK! WITH A HOLE IN IT, MY SPACE-SUIT WAS USELESS! SOON THE TANK WAS FILLED WITH AIR! MEANWHILE THE LITTLE PUFF OF GREY HAD ATTACKED AGAIN! I STRIPPED OFF MY SPACE SUIT AND FLUNG IT TO THE FLOOR! THEN I GOT AN IDEA...'

I'VE GOT *MATCHES* HERE, SOMEWHERE...

'AS THE GREY-DEATH STREAMED TOWARD ME FOR ANOTHER ATTACK, I STRUCK A MATCH! THE PUFF SEEMED TO HESITATE AS IF IT SENSED AND FEARED THE FLAME...'

IF... IF IT'S *AFRAID*... THERE MUST BE A *REASON!*

'I PLUNGED THE LIT MATCH INTO THE GREY CLOUD AND IT FLARED UP IN A SHEET OF FLAME...'

'OUTSIDE MY TANK I COULD HEAR THE REST OF THE GREY-DEATH HISSING AND HAMMERING, AS THOUGH IT REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE SMALL PART THAT I HAD BURNED...'

I'M *TRAPPED* IN HERE! MY SPACE SUIT IS *RUINED!*

'I EYED THE FEW TINS OF EMERGENCY RATIONS I HAD MANAGED TO MOVE INTO THE ATMOSPHERE-ADJUSTMENT TANK BEFORE THE HIDEOUS STUFF HAD RETURNED...'

THERE ISN'T ENOUGH FOOD TO LAST *ONE WEEK!*

'AND SO, IN MY LAST DAYS, I AM WRITING ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED! MY FOOD IS GONE! MY HAND GROWS WEAK! I CAN HARDLY HOLD THE PENCIL!'

IS THAT ALL THERE *IS*, CAPTAIN LARKIN?

NO! THERE'S *ONE MORE PARAGRAPH!* IT'S SCRAWLY... HARDLY LEGIBLE! IT SAYS, 'I THINK THE GREY-CLOUD-OF-DEATH IS PART OF THE VAST CLOUD LAYER THAT SURROUNDS VENUS! IT IS THE *FORM OF LIFE THAT EXISTS THERE!*' THE REST IS ILLEGIBLE!

C'MON! LET'S GET BACK TO THE VENUS-2!

THE INVESTIGATORS FROM THE VENUS-2 MADE THEIR WAY TO THE PORT OF THE RAVAGED VENUS-1...

WHAT DO YOU THINK, CAPTAIN? SHALL WE CONTINUE ON TO VENUS OR RETURN TO EARTH?

I DON'T KNOW! IF THE CLOUD-STUFF IS... *WHAT THE...!*

CAPTAIN LARKIN STOOD FRAMED IN THE PORT OF THE VENUS-1, GAZING OUT OVER THE BLACK STRETCH OF SPACE THAT SEPARATED THEM FROM VENUS-2! THE OTHERS CROWDED BEHIND HIM...

WHAT IS IT, CAPTAIN? WHAT DO YOU SEE?

LOOK! LOOK AT THE *VENUS-2!*

GOOD LORD!

A GREY CLOUD SWIRLED AND TWISTED AROUND VENUS-2 AS IT HUNG THERE IN THE VOID OF SPACE...

VENUS-2! CALLING VENUS-2! THIS IS CAPTAIN LARKIN! COME IN, VENUS-2! COME IN...

HELLO, CAPTAIN! THIS IS JACKOBS ON THE VENUS-2! DO YOU SEE THAT STUFF...?

GET OUT OF HERE, JACKOBS! GET THE SHIP OUT OF HERE!

BUT, CAPTAIN! WE CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT YOU!

THIS IS AN ORDER, JACKOBS! GET THE VENUS-2 THE BLAZES OUT OF HERE... BACK TO EARTH!

YES, SIR!

...AND MAKE IT SNAPPY!

FROM THE PORT OF THE WRECKED VENUS-1, CAPTAIN LARKIN WATCHED THE VENUS-2 FIRE ITS ROCKETS AND BEGIN MOVING AWAY...

THERE THEY GO!

THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!

THANK GOD!

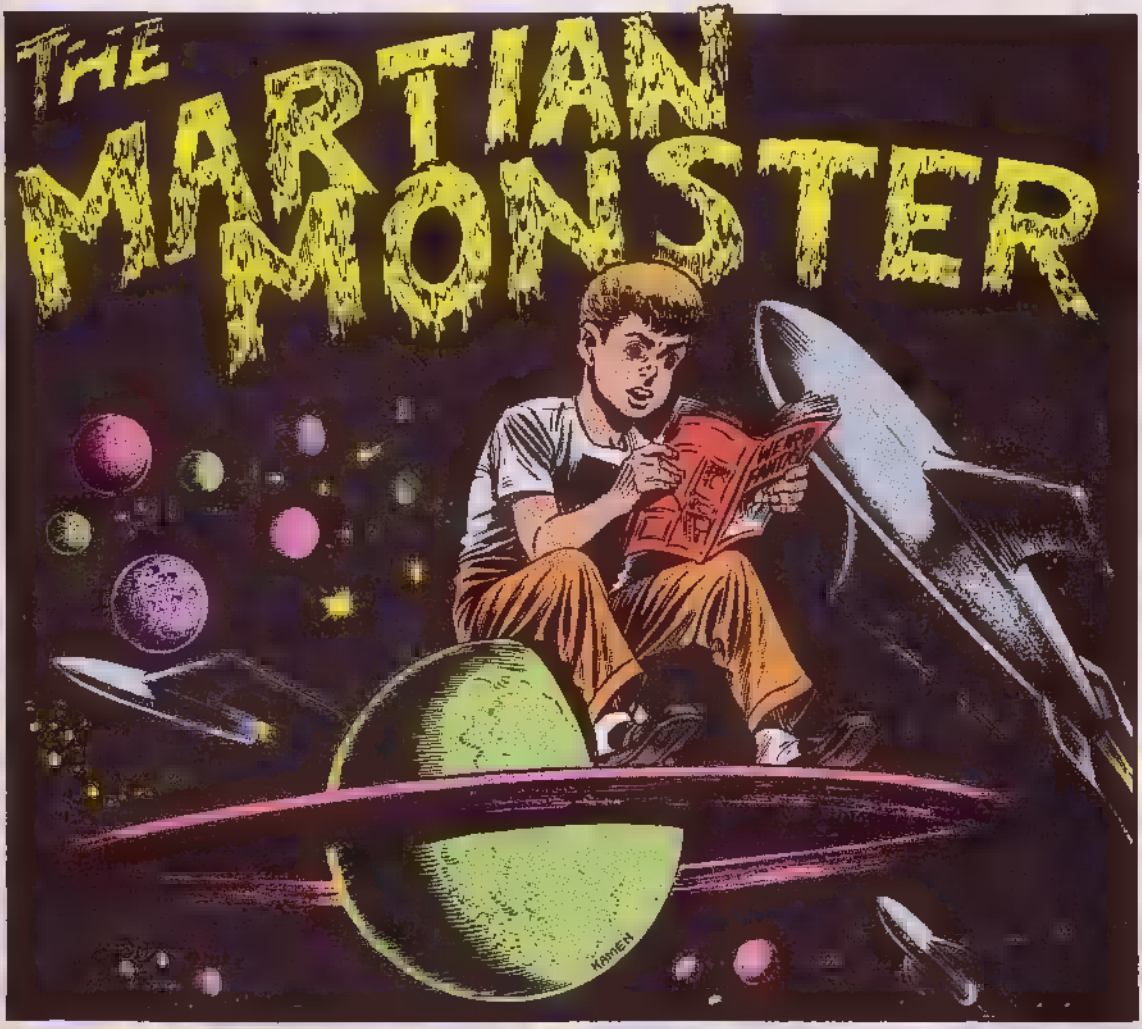
AS THE VENUS-2 MOVED FASTER AND FASTER, THE GREY CLOUD WAS LEFT FAR BEHIND! IT SWIRLED ABOUT ANGRILY...

LOOK, CAPTAIN LARKIN! THE GREY-DEATH! IT'S STARTING TOWARD US! IT SEEMS ANGRY THAT THE VENUS-2 GOT AWAY FROM IT!

THE MEN THAT THE VENUS-2 LEFT BEHIND ON THE STRIPPED VENUS-1 WATCHED WITH MORBID FASCINATION AS THE GREY CLOUD SPED TOWARDS THEM...WATCHED AS CERTAIN DEATH NEARED...

THE END

THE MARTIAN MONSTER



FREDDY HARMON SAT CROSS-LEGGED ON A FLAT ROCK UNDER A SHADY OAK TREE READING HIS FAVORITE SCIENCE-FICTION COMIC BOOK! HIS NINE-YEAR-OLD EYES WIDENED IN AMAZEMENT AS THEY SKIPPED FROM PANEL TO PANEL, DRINKING IN THE EXCITING WORDS AND MARVELOUS PICTURES! SUDDENLY, A TWIG SNAPPED BEHIND FREDDY! HE TURNED...

WHO...WHO'S THERE?

WEIRD FANTASY

FREDDY PEERED INTO THE BUSHES SURROUNDING HIM! THERE WAS *SOMEONE* THERE! FREDDY COULD SEE HIM MOVING! HE CAUGHT A FLASH OF BRIGHT ORANGE AS THE FIGURE SCURRIED ACROSS A BREAK ■ THE BUSHES! FREDDY STOOD UP... FRIGHTENED...

WHO'S THERE? COME OUT FROM BEHIND THOSE BUSHES, WHOEVER YOU ARE!

I... DON'T WANT TO FRIGHTEN YOU, LITTLE BOY! LET ME HIDE HERE! WE CAN TALK...

FREDDY'S FACE WAS FIRM AS HE CROSSED HIS ARMS AND TURNED AWAY...
I'M SORRY! I DON'T TALK TO PEOPLE I CAN'T SEE!
BUT YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME. LITTLE BOY! I'M... NOT VERY... PRETTY!
YOU SEE, LITTLE BOY! I...I'VE COME FROM OUTER SPACE! I'M A... A MARTIAN!
REALLY? A REAL GENUINE MARTIAN? AW! I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
IF YOU SAW ME, YOU'D BELIEVE ME!
THEN COME OUT! I'M NOT AFRAID! PROVE IT! PROVE YOU'RE A MARTIAN!
TWO HOURS LATER, LITTLE FREDDY ENTERED THE HOUSE...HIS COMIC BOOK TUCKED UNDER HIS ARM! FREDDY'S STEP-MOTHER WAS FRANTIC...
FREDDY! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? YOUR FATHER'S BEEN HOME AN HOUR, ALREADY!
I...I'M SORRY, MA'AM! I WAS TALKING TO MY FRIEND, SOBODNO!
FREDDY'S STEP-MOTHER LED HIM INTO THE DINING ROOM TO WHERE MR. HARMON, FREDDY'S DADDY, WAS EATING...
WELL, FREDDY! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? I'M ALMOST FINISHED EATING!
HELLO, DADDY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE LATE, BUT SOBODNO...
JUST WHO IS THIS SOBODNO, FREDDY?
OH! HE'S A MARTIAN! HE'S MY FRIEND!
A WHAT?
IT'S THOSE VILE COMIC BOOKS! HE'S FILLED WITH ALL KINDS OF FANTASTIC IDEAS FROM THEM! A MARTIAN! HMMMPH!
REALLY, MA'AM! HE IS A MARTIAN! HE TOLD ME...
DON'T CALL YOUR MOTHER, "MA'AM"! SHE'S YOUR MOTHER!
SAM! PLEASE...
2

NO, DADDY! MY MOTHER'S DEAD! SHE'S MY STEP-MOTHER! I DON'T HAVE TO CALL HER 'MOMMY'! SOBODNO SAYS...
NEVER MIND WHAT YOUR MARTIAN FRIEND SAID...
MARTIAN? DID I HEAR CORRECTLY? SOMEBODY KNOW A MARTIAN?
IT WAS FREDDY'S STEP-MOTHER'S BROTHER THAT HAD JUST ENTERED THE DINING ROOM! HE SMILED WARMLY AT FREDDY...
I DO, UNCLE BEN! I MET HIM TODAY! A REAL GENUINE MARTIAN!
THAT SO? AND WHAT DOES THIS... THIS MARTIAN LOOK LIKE?
REALLY, BEN! DON'T ENCOURAGE THE BOY!
FREDDY'S EYES GREW BIG AND BRIGHT AS HE DESCRIBED HIS NEW-FOUND FRIEND...
OOOH! HE'S GOT BIG RED EYES... A GREEN NOSE... LONG TEETH.. AND BLUE HAIR! HE'S TALL... WITH AN ORANGE CAPE AND... LONG NAILS! BUT HE'S AWFULLY NICE... FRIENDLY!
FREDDY'S DADDY GOT UP FROM THE TABLE AND WIPED HIS MOUTH WITH HIS NAPKIN...
WELL! AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR DINNER, YOUNG MAN, YOU CAN TAKE ME OUT TO MEET YOUR... MARTIAN!
OH, NO, DADDY! I CAN'T! SOBODNO SAID NO!
HE SAID THAT I MUSTN'T BRING ANY OTHER PEOPLE TO SEE HIM OR HE'D FEED THEM TO THE ZATO!
THE ZATO? WHAT'S THAT?
THE ZATO'S THE MARTIAN MONSTER! SOBODNO SAYS HE EATS PEOPLE! SOBODNO BROUGHT THE ZATO WITH HIM FROM MARS!
BAH! POPPYCOCK! REALLY, SAM! DON'T YOU THINK YOU OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!
IT'S JUST THAT FREDDY HAS A VIVID IMAGINATION, BEN! WHAT WOULD YOU WANT ME TO DO?
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT HE'S A LITTLE LIAR, SAM! HE OUGHT TO BE PUNISHED!
LEAVE THE BOY ALONE, BEN! THERE'S NO HARM DONE! LET HIM HAVE HIS... SOBODNO!

C'MON, FREDDY! I HAVE TIME TO READ YOU ONE STORY BEFORE YOU GO TO BED!
OH, GOODY! THERE'S ONE IN MY COMIC BOOK YOU'LL LIKE!
AFTER SAM HAWKINS AND HIS SON FREDDY LEFT THE DINING ROOM...
OH, BEN! I CAN'T STAND IT! I'M WORRIED!
DON'T, JEAN! EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY! TRUST ME!
LATER, UP IN FREDDY'S BEDROOM...
AND IN THE LAST PANEL, ALL THE LITTLE MOKOS ARE ATTACKING THE COLONISTS...
DADDY... WHY DID YOU MARRY JEAN?
WHY, I... I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER, SON! BESIDES, YOU NEEDED A MOTHER...
DIDN'T YOU LOVE MOMMY DADDY?
OF COURSE, BOY! BUT AFTER SHE DIED, I WAS LONELY! SO WERE YOU! LITTLE BOYS NEED MOTHERS TO TAKE CARE OF THEM!
SOBODNO SAYS YOU LOVE MY STEP-MOTHER MORE'N YOU LOVE ME! HE SAYS...
NEVER MIND, FREDDY! YOU GO TO SLEEP, NOW! GOOD-NIGHT, SON!
G'NIGHT, DADDY! I HOPE SOBODNO FEEDS JEAN TO THE ZATO... THAT'S WHAT I HOPE!
THAT'S NOT A NICE THING TO HOPE FOR! YOUR STEP-MOTHER LOVES YOU, FREDDY!
NO, SHE DOESN'T! AND TOMORROW I'M GOING TO ASK SOBODNO IF HE'LL DO IT... FOR ME!
4

THE NEXT DAY, DEEP IN THE WOODS BEHIND THE HAWKINS MANSION, FREDDY SEARCHED FOR HIS MARTIAN FRIEND...
SOBODNO! SOBODNO! WHERE ARE YOU?
HERE I AM, FREDDY! OVER HERE!
FREDDY RUSHED TO THE SPOT WHERE SOBODNO WAS HIDING! THE WEIRD FIGURE STOOD THERE... JUST AS FREDDY HAD DESCRIBED HIM... WITH RED EYES... A GREEN NOSE... BLUE HAIR... AN ORANGE CAPE... LONG NAILS...
HULLO, SOBODNO!
HELLO, FREDDY!
TELL ME ABOUT THE MARTIAN MONSTER, SOBODNO! HE UGLY?
TERRIBLY UGLY, FREDDY! HE'S UGLY BEYOND WORDS! HE'S GOT TENTACLES... EIGHT EYES... COVERED WITH SLIME... AND HE EATS EARTH PEOPLE...
WOULD HE... EAT MY STEP-MOTHER IF YOU ASKED HIM TO?
HE'D EAT ANYONE I TELL HIM TO, FREDDY! BUT WHY YOUR STEP-MOTHER? SHE LIKES YOU! YOUR UNCLE BEN LIKES YOU TOO! IT'S YOUR DADDY...
MY DADDY!?
YES! IT'S YOUR DADDY WHO DOESN'T LOVE YOU! HE LOVES YOUR STEP-MOTHER MORE! HE SHOULD BE FED TO THE ZATO!
I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT! I DON'T! I DON'T!
HE MARRIED HER, DIDN'T HE? YOUR DADDY BROUGHT HER TO LIVE WITH YOU, DIDN'T HE?
BUT... HE SAID I NEEDED A MOTHER! HE SAID...
BAH! THAT'S WHAT HE SAID! TAKE IT FROM ME, FREDDY! I KNOW... I KNOW EVERYTHING! I'M A MARTIAN! IT'S YOUR DADDY THAT SHOULD BE FED TO THE TENTACLED, EIGHT-EYED, SLIME-COVERED ZATO!
9

FREDDY RAN FROM THE WEIRD FIGURE...HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS! THROUGH THE WOODS...OUT ACROSS THE SMOOTH LAWNS...UP TO THE HOUSE HE RAN...
IT'S NOT TRUE! IT'S NOT TRUE! MY DADDY LOVES ME! HE LOVES ME!
THROUGH THE CASEMENT WINDOW HE SAW JEAN, HIS STEP-MOTHER, TALKING TO HIS FATHER! FREDDY EDGED CLOSER AND LISTENED...
DO YOU LOVE ME, SAM?
OF COURSE, DARLING!
SOMETIMES...SOMETIMES I WONDER WHETHER YOU LOVE THE BOY MORE! WHETHER YOU MARRIED ME JUST SO HE'D HAVE A MOTHER!
OF COURSE NOT, JEAN! I LOVE YOU... AS A WOMAN! FREDDY'S JUST...
FREDDY HAD HEARD ENOUGH! SOBODNO HAD BEEN RIGHT...HE'D BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG! FREDDY SPUN AROUND! SOBODNO WAS RIGHT BEHIND HIM...
YOU SEE, FREDDY? YOU SEE?
I HATE HIM! I WISH HE WAS DEAD!
DO YOU, FREDDY? COME! WE'LL FIX THAT!
YOU...YOU GONNA FEED HIM TO THE ZATO, SOBODNO?
SOBODNO CROSSED OVER TO THE FRENCH DOORS THAT OPENED INTO FREDDY'S DADDY'S STUDY! HE CAREFULLY OPENED ONE OF THEM! INSIDE, FREDDY'S FATHER WAS WORKING AT HIS DESK...
NO, FREDDY! I'M GOING TO SHOOT HIM...
OH!
TWO SHOTS RANG OUT! FREDDY'S DADDY SLUMPED FORWARD AND THEN TOPPLED TO THE FLOOR! HE WAS DEAD! SOBODNO PLACED THE SMOKING GUN IN THE DEAD MAN'S HAND...
HERE, FREDDY! WHEN THE POLICE COME, YOU TELL THEM EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED... EXACTLY!
GEE, SOBODNO! YOU SHOULD HAVE FED HIM TO THE ZATO! YOU SHOULD HAVE...
6

SOBODNO RUSHED AWAY FROM THE HORRIBLE SCENE...OUT INTO THE WOODS! THERE, HE REMOVED THE BRIGHT ORANGE CLOAK...THE RED CONTACT LENSES...THE BLUE WIG...THE GREEN PUTTY-NOSE... THE FALSE TEETH...THE GLOVES WITH THE LONG NAILS...
WHAT A RIOT! HAW... HAW...
AS BEN, FREDDY'S STEP-UNCLE, STRIPPED OFF THE LAST OF THE MARTIAN MAKE-UP...
BEN? THAT YOU?
YEAH, JEAN! C'MERE! IT'S OVER! DONE! THE DOUGH'S OURS NOW!
ACTING THE MARTIAN WAS AN INSPIRATION! JUST WAIT TILL THE KID TELLS THE STORY TO THE COPS! IT'LL SLAY THEM!
AND WE WERE OUT WALKING ...WHEN IT HAPPENED! WE'VE GOT AN ALIBI! KISS ME, BEN! I'M TIRED OF THIS SISTER AND BROTHER ACT!
WHILE THE PLOTTING LOVERS WERE EMBRACING, THE POLICE...SUMMONED BY A SERVANT...QUESTIONED FREDDY...
...BUT HE LIED TO ME! SOBODNO SHOT HIM! HE DIDN'T FEED HIM TO THE ZATO LIKE HE SAID HE WOULD!
THE KID'S GOT ROCKS IN HIS HEAD, LIEUTENANT! MARTIANS! HE'S SCREWY! IT LOOKS LIKE A SUICIDE TO ME!
WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU USED TO MEET THIS SOBODNO, KID? OUT IN THE WOODS, BEHIND THE HOUSE?
YES! HE'LL BE THERE! I'LL SHOW YOU!
OKAY, KID! IN A LITTLE WHILE! FIRST WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR YOUR STEP-MOTHER AND STEP-UNCLE...
MEANWHILE...IN THE WOODS...BEHIND THE HOUSE...
IT'S TIME WE STARTED BACK! C'MON!
WAIT! I'VE GOT TO BURY THIS RIDICULOUS COSTUME! I...I... WHAT WAS THAT?
JEAN AND BEN SPUN AROUND! IT STOOD BEFORE THEM... ITS EIGHT EYES GLEAMING...ALL SLIME-COVERED...WAVING ITS DISGUSTING TENTACLES...
NO! NO! IT...IT'S THE THING I DESCRIBED TO THE KID! THE ZATO! THE MARTIAN MONSTER!
GOOD LORD!
THE END
7

THE INVADERS

THE LAUNCHING SITE WAS DESERTED! THE ONLY MOVEMENT SEEN WAS A THIN WISP OF SMOKE THAT ROSE LAZILY FROM THE CHIMNEY OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING! THE EXPERIMENTAL SATELLITE ROCKET-BOMB XS-1 STOOD SILENTLY AMID THE ABANDONED EQUIPMENT! FROM THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CAME THE IRRITATING VOICE OF A RADIO ANNOUNCER...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR WILL BE THAT OF THE *PRESIDENT* OF...

INSIDE THE GLASS-WALLED ADMINISTRATION BUILDING A GROUP OF GRIM-FACED MEN WERE GATHERED AROUND THE RADIO RECEIVER...

MY FELLOW CITIZENS! IT ■ WITH SORROW IN MY HEART AND A GREAT DREAD OF THE FUTURE FOR ALL OF US THAT I MUST REPORT THE FOLLOWING! I HAVE, THIS MORNING, ACCEPTED THE *ENEMY'S UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER TERMS!* OUR ARMIES HAVE BEEN...

IT'S *OVER! ALL OVER!*

WE'VE LOST THE WAR!

THE VOICE OF THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED ■ AN EXPRESSIONLESS MONOTONE! ONE OF THE LISTENERS BEGAN TO WEEP! ANOTHER GREW RED-FACED AND ANGRY...

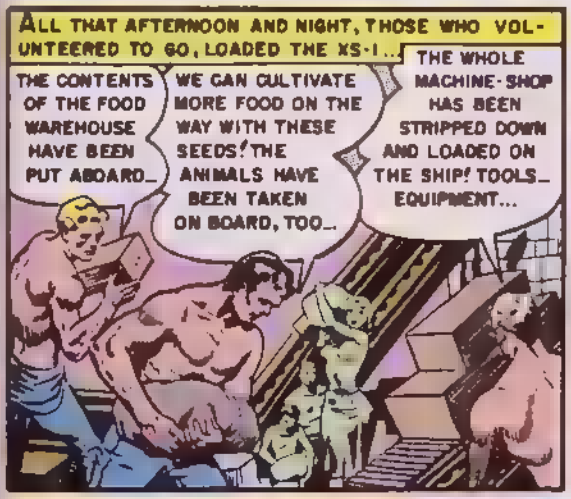
ALL WE *NEEDED* WAS *ANOTHER WEEK!* ANOTHER WEEK AND WE'D HAVE *FINISHED THE SATELLITE ROCKET...*

...WE COULD HAVE *BEATEN THEM WITH IT... BLOWN THEM SKY-HIGH!*

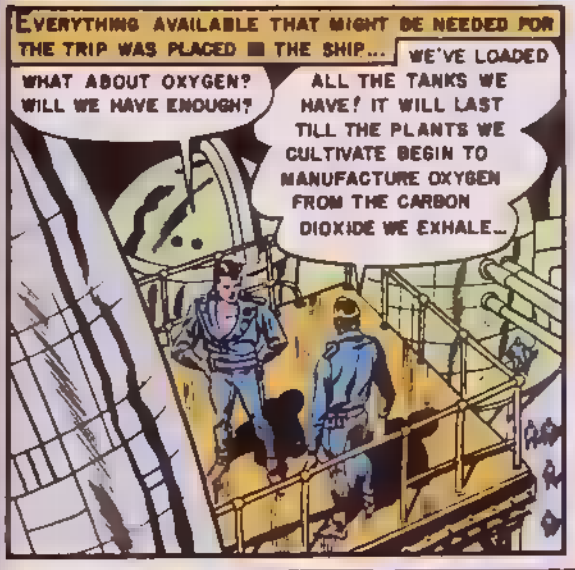
...I THEREFORE BEG YOU ALL... IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY MORE USELESS BLOODSHED...*DO NOT RESIST! LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS..*

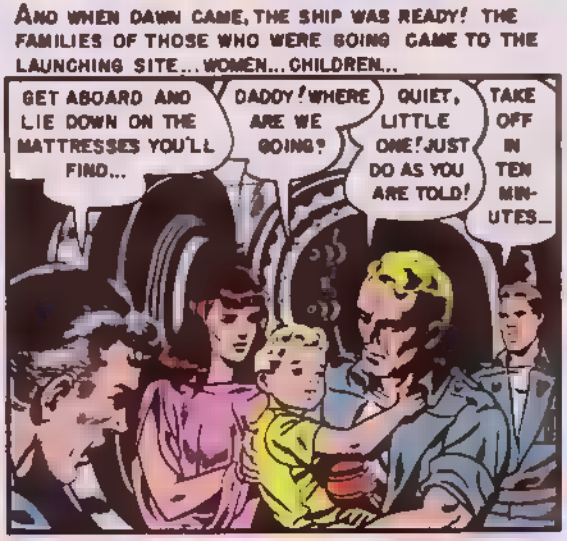
WOOD

NEVER! I'LL NEVER GIVE IN TO THOSE DIRTY...
WAIT! GENTLEMEN! LISTEN TO ME! I'VE GOT AN IDEA!
THE SHIP! THE XS-1! SHE WAS BUILT TO BE FIRED OUT INTO SPACE WHERE SHE'D FALL INTO AN ORBIT AND CIRCLE US AS A SATELLITE! THEN, BY RADIO, WE WERE GOING TO GUIDE HER INTO A STRATEGIC ENEMY TARGET! WE NEEDED BUT A WEEK TO FINISH HER! SHE LACKS ONLY THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE...
WELL, KEVE! WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
LOOK AT HER! SHE'S A PERFECT ROCKET SHIP... CAPABLE OF SPACE TRAVEL...
YOU MEAN... ESCAPE IN HER?
WHY NOT? WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE? WE'VE LOST THE WAR! SOON OUR COUNTRY WILL BE OCCUPIED BY ENEMY TROOPS! WE'VE LOST OUR FREEDOM...
BUT WHERE CAN WE GO? WE CAN'T JUST SHOOT OUT INTO SPACE AND STAY THERE!
WE'LL GO TO ANOTHER PLANET... START A COLONY... BEGIN AGAIN!
IT'S CRAZY! NO ONE'S EVER ATTEMPTED SPACE TRAVEL BEFORE! DO YOU SUGGEST WE TAKE OUR FAMILIES ALONG?
OF COURSE! WOULD YOU LEAVE THEM TO BE VICTIMS OF THE OCCUPYING FORCES?
I'M FOR IT, KEVE! LIFE IS WORTHLESS WITHOUT FREEDOM! AT LEAST THIS MIGHT BE A CHANCE...
THOSE WHO WANT TO GO ARE WELCOME! THOSE WHO PREFER TO REMAIN AND BECOME SLAVES TO THE CONQUERERS CAN DO SO! WE LEAVE TOMORROW AT DAWN! NOW, THERE'S MUCH WORK TO BE DONE...
COUNT ME AND MY FAMILY OUT!
I'M COMING! COUNT ME IN!

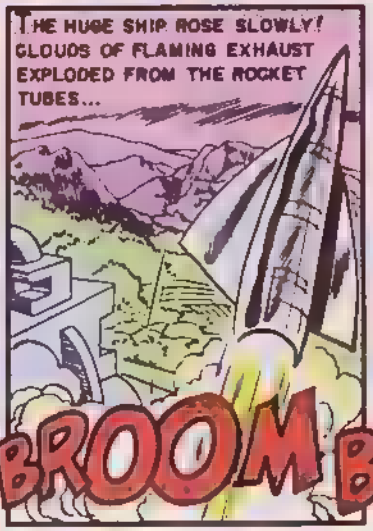

ALL THAT AFTERNOON AND NIGHT, THOSE WHO VOLUNTEERED TO GO, LOADED THE XS-1...
THE CONTENTS OF THE FOOD WAREHOUSE HAVE BEEN PUT ABOARD...
WE CAN CULTIVATE MORE FOOD ON THE WAY WITH THESE SEEDS! THE ANIMALS HAVE BEEN TAKEN ON BOARD, TOO...
THE WHOLE MACHINE-SHOP HAS BEEN STRIPPED DOWN AND LOADED ON THE SHIP! TOOLS... EQUIPMENT...

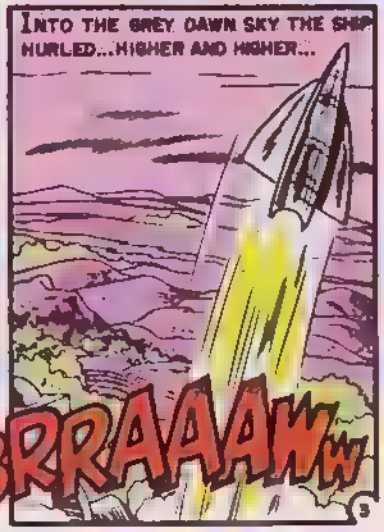
WE'VE PACKED EVERYTHING FROM THE SUPPLY ROOMS ABOARD! SHEET METAL... PLASTIC... CLOTH... SPARE PARTS...
GOOD! WE'VE GOT SPACE SUITS TO CONSTRUCT ON THE WAY IN ORDER TO EXPLORE LIKELY PLANETS...
CLANK CLANK


EVERYTHING AVAILABLE THAT MIGHT BE NEEDED FOR THE TRIP WAS PLACED IN THE SHIP...
WHAT ABOUT OXYGEN? WILL WE HAVE ENOUGH?
WE'VE LOADED ALL THE TANKS WE HAVE! IT WILL LAST TILL THE PLANTS WE CULTIVATE BEGIN TO MANUFACTURE OXYGEN FROM THE CARBON DIOXIDE WE EXHALE...


AND WHEN DAWN CAME, THE SHIP WAS READY! THE FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO WERE GOING CAME TO THE LAUNCHING SITE... WOMEN... CHILDREN...
GET ABOARD AND LIE DOWN ON THE MATTRESSES YOU'LL FIND...
DADDY! WHERE ARE WE GOING?
QUIET, LITTLE ONE! JUST DO AS YOU ARE TOLD!
TAKE OFF IN TEN MINUTES...

FINALLY THE FUGITIVES HAD ALL BOARDED THE SHIP! THE SECONDS TICKED OFF... AND THEN...
ROCKETS AWAY!!
WHR-ROOOM


THE HUGE SHIP ROSE SLOWLY! CLOUDS OF FLAMING EXHAUST EXPLODED FROM THE ROCKET TUBES...
BROOM

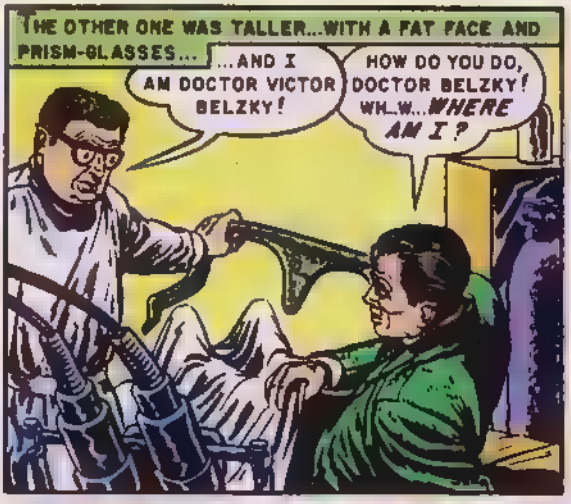

INTO THE GREY DAWN SKY THE SHIP HURLED... HIGHER AND HIGHER...
BRRAAAAWWW

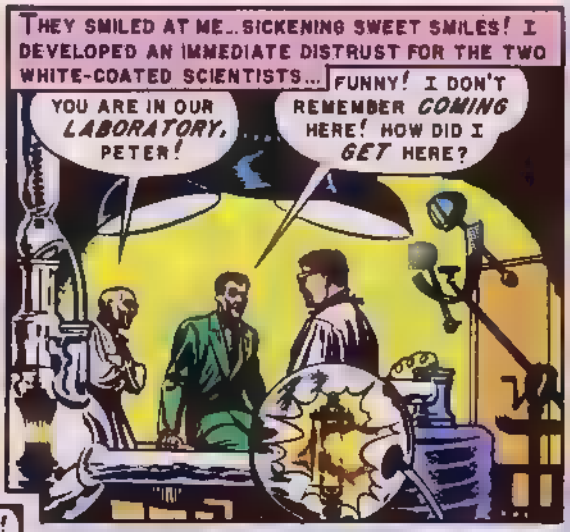
AS THE SLEEK ROCKET-SHIP SPED OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERE, THE SKY BECAME BLACK, PIN-POINTED HERE AND THERE BY DISTANT STARS...
WE'RE ON OUR WAY!
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE IS A PLANET WAITING FOR US...A PLANET WHERE WE CAN BEGIN A NEW CIVILIZATION...ONE OF PEACE...
A PLACE WHERE THERE WILL BE NO HATRED... NO WARS...
LEAVING GRAVITATIONAL FIELD! CUT OFF THE POWER! WE MUST CONSERVE OUR FUEL!
THE HUGE SHIP STREAKED THROUGH THE VOID OF OUTER SPACE IN FREE-FALL...
BRING ME THE ASTRONOMICAL CHARTS! WE MUST PICK OUT OUR DESTINATION...
YES, KEVE! HERE YOU ARE, SIR!
KEVE, WHO HAD BEEN SELECTED AS THE LEADER OF THE FLEEING SPACE-TRAVELERS, STUDIED THE CHARTS CAREFULLY...
WE MUST FIND A PLANET SIMILAR TO THE ONE WE LEFT...
...ONE THAT IS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE... WITH AN ATMOSPHERE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE! LET'S SEE, NOW...
AFTER MANY DAYS OF CALCULATIONS AND INTENSE RESEARCH, A PLANET WAS FOUND...
THERE... THERE IT IS! IF OUR FIGURES ARE CORRECT, WE HAVE FOUND OUR DESTINATION!
IS THIS IT, KEVE?
YES! THAT IS IT! WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE THE PLANET ALL TO OURSELVES! IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TRIP, MY FRIENDS! AND THERE'S MUCH TO DO...
THE WOMEN HAVE BEGUN THE PLANTING, KEVE! SOON WE WILL BE GROWING OUR OWN FOOD!
4

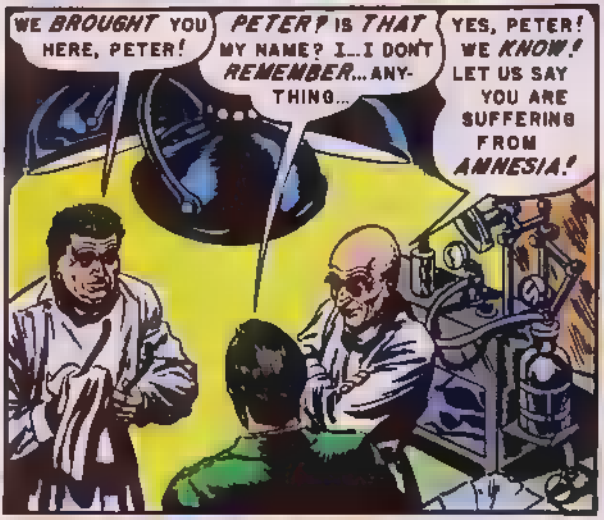
THE DAYS DRAGGED INTO WEEKS AND THE WEEKS BECAME MONTHS! BY THE END OF ONE YEAR...THE JOURNEY WAS HALF COMPLETED...
HOW DO WE STAND ON FOOD, KEVE?
THE FIRST HARVEST WAS GOOD! THE COWS HAVE REPRODUCED! WE ARE WELL FIXED, HAN!
ONE DAY...
WE ARE ENTERING THE SOLAR SYSTEM WHICH CONTAINS OUR DESTINATION!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW...
SOON THE TINY SPECK IN THE SKY GREW BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER AS THE ROCKET SHIP SPED TOWARD ITS GOAL...
LOOK! ON THE TELE-SCREEN! YOU CAN SEE THE PLANET CLEARLY, NOW!
YES! SEE! CLOUD LAYERS!
THEN IT HAS AN ATMOSPHERE!
YES! AND OCEANS, TOO!
AS THE ROCKET-SHIP DREW CLOSER...
THE LAND AREAS ARE GREEN... LIKE OUR OWN PLANET...
VEGETATION! A SIGN OF LIFE!
RIVERS...MANY RIVERS RUN THROUGH THE LAND AREAS...
THE SOIL WILL BE RICH AND FERTILE!
THINK OF IT! A FRESH NEW PLANET TO BUILD A CIVILIZATION UPON! A NEW CIVILIZATION PROFITING BY ALL THE MISTAKES OF THE WAR-DEVASTATED ONE WE LEFT BEHIND...
A PLACE WHERE OUR CHILDREN CAN GROW UP WITHOUT FEAR...UNSELFISH... KNOWING ONLY LOVE!

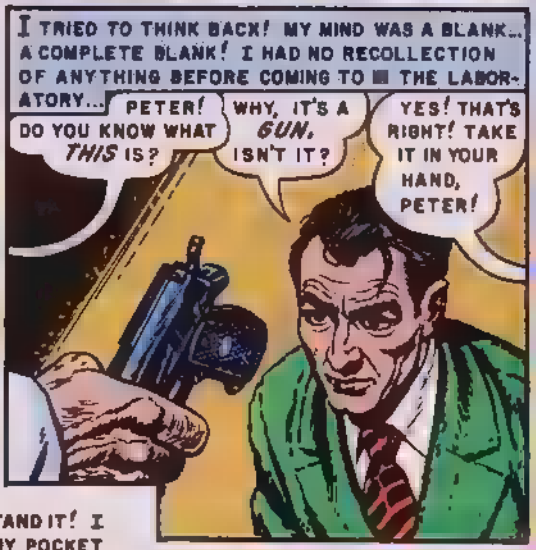
THE STRANGE PLANET LOOMED LARGE NOW...FILLING THE SCREEN! THE UNFAMILIAR LAND FORMATIONS WERE QUITE CLEAR...
SOON...
WE ARE ENTERING THE PLANET'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD!
LET US LAND ON THE LARGE NORTHERN CONTINENT... BETWEEN THE TWO OCEANS...
THE SHIP ENTERED THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE..
LOOK, KEYE! GREY AREAS! CITIES!
THEN THERE IS A CIVILIZATION HERE!
SUDDENLY, AS THE ROCKET SHIP SLIPPED, TAIL FIRST, TOWARD THE SURFACE OF THE NEW PLANET...
PERHAPS THEY ARE A PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE!
WHAT'S THAT? STRANGE AIRCRAFT!
THEY BEAR MARKINGS! WHITE STARS! SEE NOW THEY SWOOP DOWN! THEY HAVE COME TO GREET US!
THE WEIRD AIRCRAFT ZOOMED DOWN UPON THE HELPLESS, PLUMMETING SPACE-SHIP! FROM THEIR SHARP NOSES AND WING-EDGES CAME FLASHES OF FLAME...
THEY...THEY FIRE AT US...
WAIT! WAIT!
TAC TAC TAC
AAGHH!
WITH A TREMENDOUS ROAR, THE SPACE SHIP EXPLODED...
BOOM!
AS THE LAST SMOKING FRAGMENT SPINS EARTHWARD CRAZILY...THE U. S. AIR FORCE JET PLANES TURN HOMEWARD...
MISSION COMPLETED! INVADERS REPELLED.. AND DESTROYED!
COMING IN...
THE END
6

THE SLAVE OF EVIL!
OLESEN
THE FIRST THING I CAN REMEMBER IS THE BLINDING LIGHT THAT GLARED DOWN AT ME WHEN I OPENED MY EYES! THINGS WERE HAZY AND AT FIRST I COULDN'T MAKE OUT ANYTHING! THEN SHAPES BEGAN TO FORM ...PEOPLE...TWO MEN IN WHITE COATS...BENDING OVER ME...
CAN YOU HEAR ME, PETER?
Y...YES! I CAN HEAR YOU...
...AND CAN YOU SEE US, TOO?
I FOCUSED MY EYES ON THE TWO MEN STARING DOWN AT ME! ONE OF THEM WAS SHORT...BALD-HEADED... WITH SMALL, EVIL EYES...
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, PETER! I AM DOCTOR FELIX VANDERCHEF!
H...HOW DO YOU DO, DOCTOR VANDERCHEF!


THE OTHER ONE WAS TALLER...WITH A FAT FACE AND PRISM-GLASSES...
...AND I AM DOCTOR VICTOR BELZKY!
HOW DO YOU DO, DOCTOR BELZKY! WH..W...WHERE AM I?


THEY SMILED AT ME..SICKENING SWEET SMILES! I DEVELOPED AN IMMEDIATE DISTRUST FOR THE TWO WHITE-COATED SCIENTISTS...
YOU ARE IN OUR LABORATORY, PETER!
FUNNY! I DON'T REMEMBER COMING HERE! HOW DID I GET HERE?


WE BROUGHT YOU HERE, PETER!
PETER? IS THAT MY NAME? I...I DON'T REMEMBER...ANYTHING...
YES, PETER! WE KNOW! LET US SAY YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM AMNESIA!

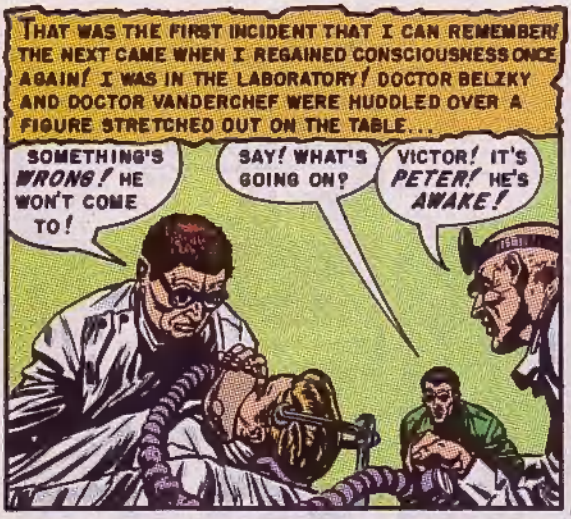

I TRIED TO THINK BACK! MY MIND WAS A BLANK.. A COMPLETE BLANK! I HAD NO RECOLLECTION OF ANYTHING BEFORE COMING TO THE LABORATORY...
PETER! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?
WHY, IT'S A GUN, ISN'T IT?
YES! THAT'S RIGHT! TAKE IT IN YOUR HAND, PETER!

DOCTOR BELZKY HANDED ME THE GUN! IT WAS FUNNY! ALTHOUGH MY MIND WAS A COMPLETE BLANK, THE GUN SEEMED FAMILIAR TO ME! I FELT AS THOUGH I KNEW ALL ABOUT IT...
IT'S LOADED, PETER! YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT?
YES, DOCTOR! I KNOW!

I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT! I PUT THE GUN INTO MY POCKET AND STARTED FOR THE DOOR! A STRANGE COMPULSION MOVED ME! IT SEEMED AS THOUGH I HAD TO DO SOMETHING...
NO, PETER! NOT IN THERE!
NEVER GO IN THERE! DO YOU HEAR? NEVER!

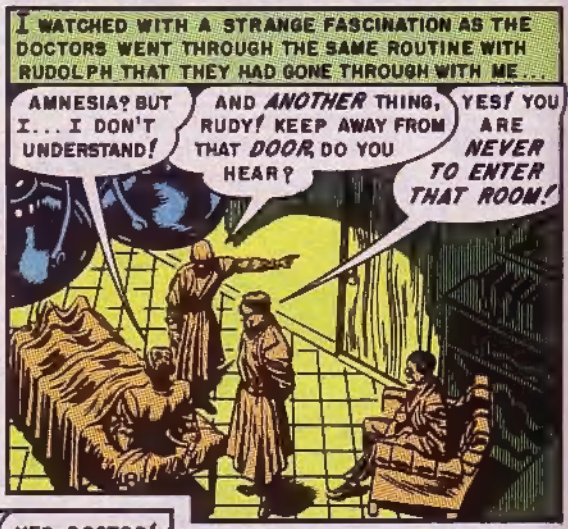
THEY GUIDED ME TO ANOTHER DOOR AND I LEFT THE LABORATORY! I SEEMED TO KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I WAS GOING...AS IF I HAD RECEIVED CAREFUL INSTRUCTIONS AT SOME TIME BEFORE...
I...I SEEM TO HAVE A...A MISSION!

SOON I CAME TO A LARGE OFFICE BUILDING! THE ADDRESS STRUCK A FAMILIAR CHORD, AND I ENTERED! I AUTOMATICALLY BY-PASSED THE ELEVATORS AND CLIMBED THE STAIRS! ON THE THIRD FLOOR I CAME TO A DOOR...
'HAROLD BERGOFF... ELECTRONIC ENGINEER'! THIS IS THE PLACE!
I WENT IN! A THIN DARK MAN JUMPED UP FROM HIS DESK AS I CLOSED THE DOOR! THERE WAS TERROR IN HIS EYES AS HE BACKED AWAY FROM ME! I DREW THE GUN...
YOU! NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE...
I PULLED THE TRIGGER AND MR. BERGOFF CRUMPLED TO THE FLOOR. I STUDIED HIS PROSTRATE FORM FOR A MOMENT! A SMALL POOL OF RED LIQUID WAS FORMING ON THE WAXED LINOLEUM...
MUST... GET THE PAPERS!
I WENT THROUGH THE GREEN METAL FILE CABINETS UNTIL I FOUND A FOLDER... THE ONE I WAS LOOKING FOR...
'VANDERCHEF-BELZKY SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS'! THIS IS IT...
I STUFFED THE FOLDER INTO MY POCKET AND LEFT! I WENT BACK DOWN THE STAIRS, OUT OF THE BUILDING, AND RETURNED TO THE LABORATORY! I DID ALL THESE THINGS UNCONSCIOUSLY... AS THOUGH I'D BEEN WELL BRIEFED...
I'M BACK!
DID YOU GET THE BLUE-PRINTS, PETER?
QUIET, FELIX! YOU TALK TOO MUCH! THE FOLDER, PETER...
I HANDED DOCTOR BELZKY THE FOLDER! HE SHUFFLED THROUGH THE BLUE SHEETS WITH THE WHITE MARKINGS AND NODDED HIS HEAD...
EVERYTHING'S HERE, FELIX!
THEN THE SECRET IS OURS NOW, VICTOR! ALL OURS!
WHAT SECRET?
DOCTOR BELZKY WENT OUT OF THE LABORATORY THROUGH THE FORBIDDEN DOOR! AS HE OPENED IT, I HEARD THE SOUND OF MOTORS AND WHEELS SPINNING AND THE SHARP CLICKING OF INVISIBLE GEARS AND RELAYS...
SIT DOWN, PETER! YOU'RE TIRED! YOU NEED REST!
YES... I...
THEN, SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING WENT BLACK! AS THOUGH I HAD FALLEN INTO AN EMPTY, SILENT VOID...


THAT WAS THE FIRST INCIDENT THAT I CAN REMEMBER! THE NEXT CAME WHEN I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS ONCE AGAIN! I WAS IN THE LABORATORY! DOCTOR BELZKY AND DOCTOR VANDERCHEF WERE HUDDLED OVER A FIGURE STRETCHED OUT ON THE TABLE...
SOMETHING'S WRONG! HE WON'T COME TO!
SAY! WHAT'S GOING ON?
VICTOR! IT'S PETER! HE'S AWAKE!

OF COURSE! HE HAS TO BE! HOW ELSE CAN WE TEST RUDOLPH, HERE?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT! PETER! JUST SIT THERE AND BE QUIET!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?

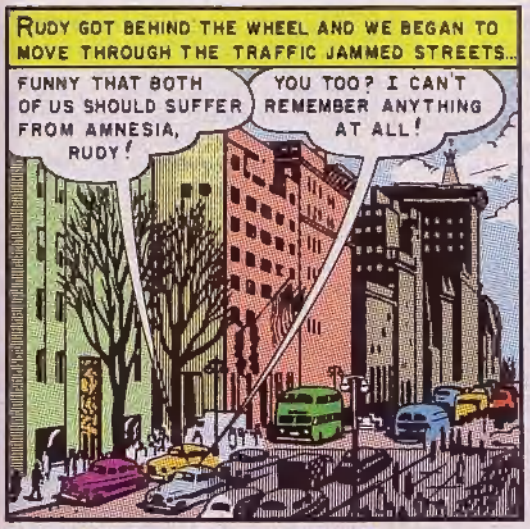
NOTHING! JUST MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!
LOOK, FELIX! RUDOLPH IS MOVING NOW!
WHERE...WHERE AM I?

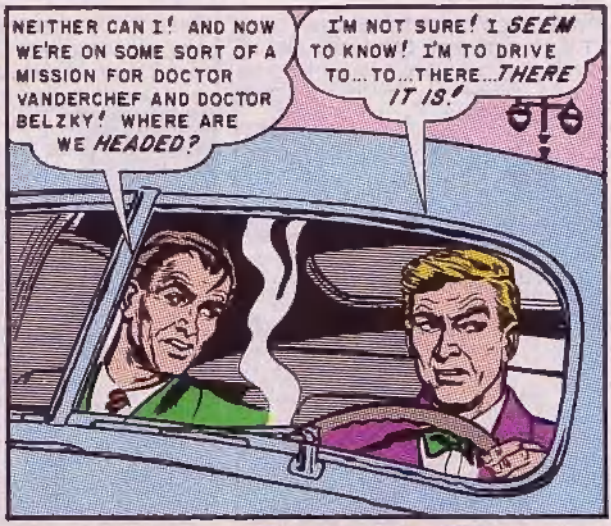

I WATCHED WITH A STRANGE FASCINATION AS THE DOCTORS WENT THROUGH THE SAME ROUTINE WITH RUDOLPH THAT THEY HAD GONE THROUGH WITH ME...
AMNESIA? BUT I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
AND ANOTHER THING, RUDY! KEEP AWAY FROM THAT DOOR, DO YOU HEAR?
YES! YOU ARE NEVER TO ENTER THAT ROOM!

AND NOW, I WANT YOU TO MEET PETER! HE'S ANOTHER OF OUR...PATIENTS! PETER... MEET RUDY!
HELLO, PETER!
HOW DO YOU DO, RUDY?

HERE IS YOUR GUN, RUDY! NOW, YOU BOTH KNOW WHAT TO DO!
YES, DOCTOR!
YES, SIR!

I FOLLOWED RUDY OUT OF THE DOOR. I FELT THE SAME STRANGE COMPULSION THAT I HAD FELT WHEN I VISITED MR. BERGOFF! RUDY SEEMED TO BE MOVING WITH A PURPOSE TOO...
HERE'S THE CAR!
I'M TO DRIVE!

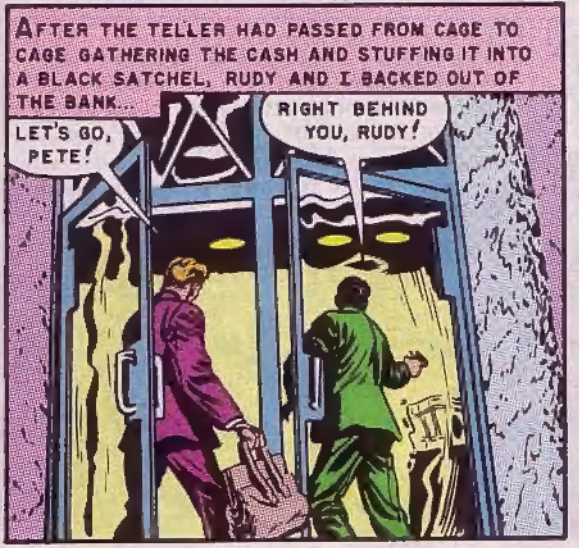

RUDY GOT BEHIND THE WHEEL AND WE BEGAN TO MOVE THROUGH THE TRAFFIC JAMMED STREETS...
FUNNY THAT BOTH OF US SHOULD SUFFER FROM AMNESIA, RUDY!
YOU TOO? I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING AT ALL!

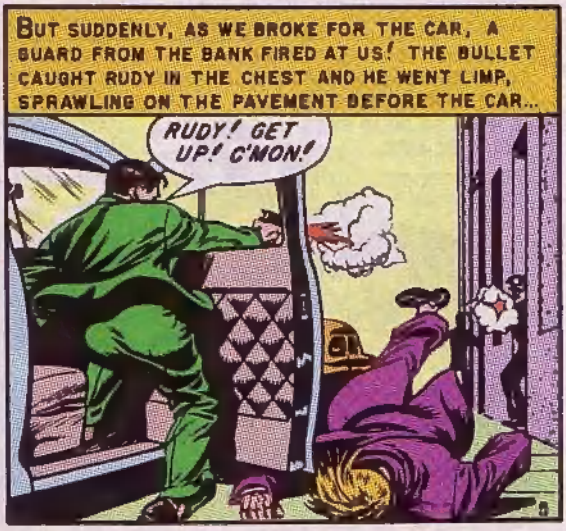

NEITHER CAN I! AND NOW WE'RE ON SOME SORT OF A MISSION FOR DOCTOR VANDERCHEF AND DOCTOR BELZKY! WHERE ARE WE HEADED?
I'M NOT SURE! I SEEM TO KNOW! I'M TO DRIVE TO...TO...THERE...THERE IT IS!

RUDY STOPPED THE CAR BEFORE AN IMPRESSIVE BUILDING! THE SIGN OVER THE ENTRANCE READ, "FIRST NATIONAL BANK"...
C'MON!
YES! THIS IS THE PLACE!
NATIONAL BANK

IT SEEMED AS THOUGH RUDY AND I KNEW EACH MOVE PERFECTLY...
ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY! LINE UP WITH YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEADS!
FOLLOW OUR ORDERS AND NOBODY'LL GET HURT!

I TURNED TO A TELLER BEHIND A CAGE...
YOU!
GET ALL THE CASH AND HAND IT OVER!
YES! PLEASE DON'T SHOOT!


AFTER THE TELLER HAD PASSED FROM CAGE TO CAGE GATHERING THE CASH AND STUFFING IT INTO A BLACK SATCHEL, RUDY AND I BACKED OUT OF THE BANK...
LET'S GO, PETE!
RIGHT BEHIND YOU, RUDY!


BUT SUDDENLY, AS WE BROKE FOR THE CAR, A GUARD FROM THE BANK FIRED AT US! THE BULLET CAUGHT RUDY IN THE CHEST AND HE WENT LIMP, SPRAWLING ON THE PAVEMENT BEFORE THE CAR...
RUDY! GET UP! C'MON!

RUDY DIDN'T MOVE! HE JUST LAY THERE STIFFLY! I DRAGGED HIM INTO THE CAR AMID A HAIL OF FLYING LEAD...
SPAT
THEN I JUMPED BEHIND THE WHEEL AND WE TOOK OFF! I DROVE AUTOMATICALLY, ALTHOUGH I COULDN'T REMEMBER EVER DRIVING BEFORE.
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS? WHY...WHY DO I DO THESE THINGS?
I WAS ANGRY...TERRIBLY ANGRY! I RESENTED THE STRANGE COMPULSIONS THAT HAD FORCED ME TO ROB THE BANK AND HAD PREVIOUSLY FORCED ME TO KILL MR. BERGOFF, THE ELECTRONIC ENGINEER! I LOOKED AT RUDY SPRAWLED LIMPLY BESIDE ME. THERE WAS A NEAT ROUND HOLE IN HIS CHEST WHERE THE BULLET HAD STRUCK HIM...
BUT THERE'S NO RED LIQUID OOZING OUT OF THE HOLE LIKE IT DID WHEN I SHOT BERGOFF!
AS I DROVE MADLY THROUGH THE CITY, I BECAME MORE AND MORE ENRAGED AT DOCTOR BELZKY AND DOCTOR VANDERCHEF! WHEN I GOT BACK TO THE LABORATORY I SLIPPED IN QUIETLY! NO ONE WAS THERE! FROM BEHIND THE FORBIDDEN DOOR CAME VOICES! I EDGED CLOSER AND LISTENED...
THEY'LL BE BACK SOON, VICTOR! BACK WITH THE MONEY WE NEED!
YES, FELIX! THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE MORE OF THEM... MORE AND MORE...
THE FIENDS! SO THEY MADE ME LIKE THIS... CAUSED MY AMNESIA...
SOON WE'LL CONTROL ENOUGH OF THEM TO TAKE OVER THE WHOLE WORLD...
IT'S BEEN A LOT OF WORK... FEEDING THE MACHINE THE INFORMATION IT NEEDED... LANGUAGE... KNOWLEDGE... BUT NOW IT'S BEGINNING TO PAY OFF...
I DIDN'T GET IT! WHAT MACHINE WERE THEY TALKING ABOUT...
YES, FELIX! THE ELECTRONIC-BRAIN HAS ALL THE KNOW-HOW! NOW, ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS FEED IT OUR PLANS...
...AND THE ROBOTS— THAT THE ELECTRONIC-BRAIN CONTROLS... WILL CARRY THEM OUT!
ROBOTS...CONTROLLED BY AN ELECTRONIC-BRAIN! WAS I A ROBOT? I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THEN I THOUGHT OF RUDY... AND THE LITTLE ROUND HOLE IN HIS CHEST WITH NO RED LIQUID OOZING OUT! I SWUNG OPEN THE DOOR...
PETER!
WE TOLD YOU NEVER TO COME IN HERE, PETER!
I HEARD WHAT YOU WERE SAYING!
3

HE'S POINTING HIS GUN AT US, FELIX! QUICKLY! SHUT OFF THE MACHINE! HE'S USING IT TO THINK WITH!
DON'T MOVE, DOCTOR VANDERCHEF! I NEED THAT MACHINE... TO DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO..
NOW, WAIT A MINUTE, PETER! TAKE IT EASY!
NO, FELIX! I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING, NOW! I'M A ROBOT, EH? YOU FEED YOUR EVIL PLANS TO THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN... TURN IT ON... IT RADIOS SIGNALS TO ME... AND I DO YOUR DIRTY WORK...
FELIX! HE'S GONE WILD! SHUT OFF THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN BEFORE HE SHOOTS US!
YES! YES! I...
I PULLED THE TRIGGER OF MY GUN! FELIX... WHO HAD REACHED FOR THE SWITCH THAT WOULD CUT OFF MY ELECTRONIC BRAIN AND HURL ME INTO THE BLACK VOID AGAIN... FELL DEAD... THE RED LIQUID OOZING FROM HIS WOUND...
YOU... YOU KILLED HIM!
WHY NOT, VICTOR? HAVEN'T I KILLED BEFORE?
DON'T SHOOT ME, PETER! I'M HUMAN! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT METAL AND WIRE...
...AND A WONDERFUL ELECTRONIC BRAIN, DOCTOR! AN ELECTRONIC BRAIN THAT HAROLD BERGOFF BUILT FOR YOU...
YES! YES! HE BUILT IT! BUT HE DIDN'T DREAM OF THE USE WE'D HAVE FOR IT! DON'T SHOOT, PETER! PLEASE... DON'T...
I MUST, VICTOR! I MUST! I MUST FREE MYSELF OF YOUR EVIL CONTROL!
VICTOR BELZKY FELL AS I TRIGGERED THE GUN ONCE AGAIN! I BENT AND TOUCHED HIS WARM FLESH AND THEN MY OWN COLD PLASTIC SKIN! THEN I TURNED TO THE HUGE ELECTRONIC BRAIN WITH ITS MILLIONS OF WHEELS AND RELAYS WHIRRING AND CLICKING...
...AND NOW THAT I HAVE DESTROYED THEM, I MUST DESTROY THE MACHINE THAT GIVES ME LIFE!
I AM WRITING THIS IN MY LAST MINUTES! THE WONDERFUL ELECTRONIC COMPUTER... MY BRAIN... CONCEIVED OF A PERFECT WAY FOR ME TO DESTROY IT! THE CHARGE IS SET! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS PRESS THIS BUTTON AND THE MACHINE WILL BE BLASTED TO SMITHEREENS, AND I WILL BE REDUCED ONCE AGAIN TO A LIFELESS MANNIKIN OF WIRE AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT... NOTHING MORE! AND YET... I MUST DO IT! IF I DON'T, SOMEONE ELSE WILL USE THE MACHINE FOR THEIR OWN SELFISH PURPOSES AND ONCE MORE I WILL BECOME A SLAVE OF EVIL...
THE END
7